

STATEMENT
OF
GWENDOLYN BROWN

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE AND TRANSPORTATION
UNITED STATES SENATE

ON THE
PRESIDENT'S NOMINATION TO BE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

OF THE
NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION

SEPTEMBER 17, 2003

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, it is a pleasure to be here this afternoon. I am extremely honored to be the President's nominee as Chief Financial Officer for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, in NASA's 45th year of pioneering the future. If confirmed, I would enter the job fully committed and dedicated to continue managing NASA's financial management operations with unfaltering diligence and integrity.

It is a distinct honor for me to be introduced to the Committee today by the President Pro Temp of the Senate, Senator Ted Stevens. Early in my career, he taught me the life-long lessons about the value of public service. Now, as I intend to contribute to the Agency's advancement of exploration and discovery of humanity's newest frontier, I am honored that he is here today.

I am very pleased that my father, Bill Sykes, and mother, Sandra Sykes, are sharing this special experience with me today. I owe a lot to my father, including the fact that his service in the United States Air Force brought our family to Alaska. My father taught me the value of public service and has been my constant and faithful guide throughout my federal career.

From my mother, I learned the value of caring for others and what it means to be a public servant. As a nurse midwife she traveled on bush planes throughout rural Alaska to bring new lives into the world, in places where medical care was not readily available. She completed her career this year by serving as a Prison Nurse, a job in which her expressions of respect and care may have helped more than a few individuals get back on the right path in life.

I have also been honored throughout my career to serve with many distinguished people. Here today is one of my mentors, Alvin Tucker, the former Deputy Chief Financial Officer for the Department of Defense. He took a young lady from Alaska, showed her the ropes, and taught me how Government financial managers provide judicious management of scarce taxpayer resources. I would like to acknowledge the presence of Calvin Springfield, a good friend and sage counsel to me over many years. Also, I have had the benefit of working with many professional individuals who have been instrumental in my career in leading and guiding me – Lt. Colonel Paul and Gwen Patton, Gerald Parker, Ermerdene Lee, Marlana Hunter, Daphne Jefferson, and Carolyn Carmack, all of whom have played a part in formulating my goals and vision to effectively manage in these challenging days ahead for NASA.

As I hope I have conveyed, these treasured friends and family members exemplify qualities I plan to emulate in the position of Chief Financial Officer. Accordingly, I would like the Committee to know that I recognize the importance of maintaining NASA's financial integrity as we safely return to flight, continue our Nation's exploration and discovery of new horizons, and produce tangible technological and economic benefits for the American public. Effective financial management is critical as we address both our challenges and opportunities in the months and years ahead.

My 17 years of public service and financial management experience, have prepared me well, I believe, for the challenges I will face. Further, I am honored that during Administrator Sean O'Keefe's tenure, he has shown confidence in my abilities which has been reflected by the important assignments he has bestowed upon me. After joining the Agency as the Deputy Chief Financial Manager, Mr. O'Keefe ask me to take on the challenge of leading the organization through its fiscal year 2002 audit. We recently achieved a clean opinion from the Government's independent auditor. This improvement from the Agency's disclaimer of opinion for its fiscal year 2001 financial statements was a first step in improving NASA's financial credibility.

In addition to achieving a clean opinion, the implementation of the new NASA Core Financial Management Systems throughout NASA was our next accomplishment. This entailed the consolidation and retirement of ten-legacy accounting systems at each of the respective ten centers into one accounting system. I am pleased to report that as of July 2003, we have fully implemented the Core Financial management module of NASA's new Integrated Financial Management Program. I am confident that this program will enhance NASA's ability to use internal financial information to provide the Congress and the American public with greater transparency, accountability and performance of NASA's use of scarce public resources.

These are just a few innovations that I am proud to have contributed to in helping to strengthen NASA's financial management. I believe we have taken the first step in a long process to restore credibility in financial management at NASA. I am committed to Administrator O'Keefe's goals and we plan to achieve them. I look forward to the prospect of working with the Committee to continue the enhancement of effective

financial management of our Nation's aeronautics and space activities and I am prepared to accept this challenge.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Committee today. I would be pleased to respond to any questions the Committee may have.

Thank you.